https://zekkass.livejournal.com/407020.html

For **~~sin_stained_ink~~**: Gabriel/Castiel, PG, gentleness - this didn't want to be porn at all. Set post-5x18, pre-5x19, and it's AU.

As Castiel returns to consciousness, he feels fingers on his wings, and the singular sensation of another's Grace brushing his own.

He holds himself still, stops breathing, and tries to figure out which angel it is, which of his family is crouched over him.

"You were really messed up, bro," he hears Gabriel murmur. "Want to stop hiding that you're awake, now?"

Gabriel. Castiel suffers a brief wave of hurt, remembering the last time he saw Gabriel, remembering all that has happened since.

"Dean," he says, and coughs, and tries to sit up before Gabriel pins him with a gentle hand. "Did he - ?"

"Both Winchesters lack an archangel," Gabriel says with a soft sigh. "Not even a hello for me?"

"Let me up."

He feels fingers brush through his hair, pet his neck, and he closes his eyes again. For a moment he wants to stay, to accept this comfort, but -

"Gabriel," he says, and forces his eyes open once more. "Let me up."

He folds his wings away into another plane, where they can't hurt humans, and starts pushing Gabriel's Grace away from his own, even as he craves the warmth, and the power that Gabriel so obviously radiates to his eyes.

When he tries to sit up this time, Gabriel doesn't stop him.

Castiel looks at the archangel, then away.

"Why did you help me?" Castiel asks, and thinks that he should be dead, or human. Not almost whole again.

"I may have a thing for lost causes," Gabriel says, and Castiel watches his lick his lips. "And underdogs. And saving you is a guaranteed ticket into the Winchester's camp, even if it'll take a lot more before they even begin to trust me."

"You're..." Castiel trails off.

Gabriel nods, quietly.

"Thank you," Castiel says, and this time, when Gabriel's Grace brushes his own, he - carefully, carefully still, he must be wary yet - he touches back, the equivalent of

fingertips brushing each other.

Gabriel closes his eyes.

Castiel watches him, and when Gabriel whispers 'thanks', Castiel knows that he's not saying everything.

So Castiel takes Gabriel's hand and holds it as he brushes back with more force, and when Gabriel breaks and hugs him...he lets him.

Castiel marvels at being alive and whole, and holds the shaking archangel in his arms.

"Thank you," Gabriel keeps whispering, over and over.